Building Resilience at NSW Ambulance
Organisational background

> Provides emergency health care and patient transport for NSW
> One of the largest ambulance services in the world
> Responding to over 1.1m incidents (an ambulance every 24 seconds)
> Employing approximately 4,300 people + 300 volunteers
> 300 work locations
> Using more than 1500 ambulances and other vehicles
The past... (Pre 2008)

- Ad hoc programs and minimal resourcing
- Committed staff but little coordination
- Limited understand of value or vision for how programs could build resilience and capacity
- Poorly integrated Staff Support Services
The present...

Healthy Workplace Strategies
Healthy Workplace Strategies

> Dedicated Manager
> Respectful Workplace Management Advisor
> Equity and Diversity
> Chaplaincy
> Peer Support and EAP
> Mental Health Program
> Health and Wellness Program

> Driving cultural change
> Strategic planning
> Data analysis
> Providing advice
> Developing policy
> Training and education
> Staff support
> Mediation
Building capacity builds resilience

> Understanding the workforce and our culture has been vital
> Developing early intervention strategies
> Developing clear policies to govern all programs
> Extensive education programs at all levels of the organisation
> Proactive and reactive integrated staff support programs
> Holistic health and wellness program
> Strengthening mental capacity and wellbeing
> Championing the cause of minority groups
Early intervention builds resilience

> Strong focus on examining the past and learning from critical events and incidents
> Focusing on improving policy and procedures, education and training, the early resolution of disputes, and pathways for resolving issues
> Normalising the availability of Staff Support Services and building capacity of the team
Education builds resilience

> All frontline staff trained in stress management, resilience building and mental health awareness

> Frontline managers receive staff support awareness and training

> All staff and volunteers trained in maintaining a respectful workplace

> All staff aware of how to access support and how to look out for the wellbeing of colleagues
  - Z-Cards
  - New Staff Support App
Staff support centrally coordinated and lead by dedicated managers

- 140+ Peer Support Officers
- 30 Chaplains
- 15 Grievance Contact Officers
- Supportive managers
- EAP is regularly utilised
- High visibility programs make it normal to access support.
Health programs build resilience

> Dedicated health and wellness manager and health coach
> Encourage goal setting and healthy thinking
> Encourage physical activity and healthy diet
> Develop healthy relationships with colleagues
Case Study – Recent NSW fires

> Major impact in the Blue Mountains
> Three paramedics lost their homes, many had homes under threat
> Managers contacted all staff in the area to check on wellbeing and offer any help needed
> Peer Support activated

> EAP was activated
> Chaplains deployed to the area for over a week
> Staff supported each other very effectively
> NSW Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) Risk Management Leadership Award in 2011
> Respectful Workplace Training Program won the 2012 TMF Innovation Award for the best NSW Public Sector strategy that improved performance in strategic risk management
> NSW Health Insurable Risk Award for Innovation in 2012
> Recognised in the NSW Public Sector Report 2012, as a case study of best practice in addressing workplace culture
> R U OK? Day Workplace Award at the 2012 Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) Diversity Awards
> Finalist 2012 TMF Awards for Excellence, Framework and Systems WHS Award – Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Paramedics
> Finalist 2013 Australian HR Awards, Australian HR Team of the Year
> Finalist 2013 AHRI Martin Seligman Award for Health and Wellbeing, Engagement and Productivity – NSW Ambulance Healthy Workplace Strategies (winner to be announced in December 2013)
Transferable lessons and strategies

- Understand workplace culture and ethos to identify areas to target
- It is about changing culture over time
- Engage content experts to drive programs
- Develop and embed educational programs to foster resilience
- Normalise the use of staff support services and provide several options
- Think holistically about the needs of staff: mental, physical, and spiritual
- Integrate programs as much as possible and promote key messages
Rev. Paul McFarlane
Senior Chaplain

0412 663 159
pmcfarlane@ambulance.nsw.gov.au